

# Executive Director Performance Review and Recommendations

## Report of the Contracting and Search Committee

### April 10, 2021

#### Background

The Contracting and Search Committee was charged with doing a performance review for Rebecca Niles in her position as Executive Director, and to make recommendations for the review process to be performed annually in the fall of each year.

#### State of the Central Office

After moving from the University at Albany, where the activities of the Society's professional staff were devoted to Society activities, the Society contracted with CHMS to provide support services. With CHMS, the Executive Director was dedicated to Society activities, while all other personnel provided support to several organizations. Rebecca Niles came on as Executive Director full time at the beginning of 2020 working with CHMS, and then led the transition away from CHMS to a decentralized office with a mix of dedicated and shared service contractors.

#### 2020 and 2021 Review Process

Because the structure of the Central Office has changed, we recommend a new review process beginning in 2021. Details of what we think makes the more sense are given below, but in brief it is a review of the overall function of the Central Office, as opposed to a review only focused on Rebecca. For 2020 we are presenting a simpler report.

#### 2020

For 2020, Rebecca was working with CHMS to deliver services, responding to the changes caused by the pandemic, and designing and readying the transition to the new working model. The year went well, exceeding the expectations of committee members. It was successful financially, coming in well ahead of budget. The conference, held virtually for the first time, was also a success both in terms of the revenue it generated and the high level of participation from people around the world. The webinars and other activities that were initiated in 2020 also reached a wide range of people, and the move to more frequent Policy Council meetings has helped increase communication among Officers and PC Members. So, while none of us would want to repeat the events of 2020, the Society, under Rebecca's leadership responded nimbly and well to the challenging situation and we applaud her for that.

A survey of the Policy Council members returned many favorable comments from 17 people. Most focused on the communication, outreach, and support activities Rebecca has undertaken. In short, there is a great deal of enthusiastic support for the work that has been done.

#### Areas for Development

While everyone has been impressed with the amount of work that Rebecca has done, some things have, not surprisingly, fallen to the side, or at least been put on hold over the course of the year. None of that

is unexpected given the number of things that are being done. Still, having clearer communications of priorities and timelines would be of value. This will help in setting expectations for specific initiatives or actions and allow for more productive discussion of current- and future-year priorities. Goals such as cleaning up the database, configuring membership and conference sign up processes, developing infrastructure support officer initiatives, and helping Chapters and SIGs improve their communications have made great, but uneven progress and there has not always been a clear indication of what will happen when.

The other thing the committee thinks might be valuable, if Rebecca is interested, is to help her come even further up the learning curve of Association Management through appropriate educational or supportive resources. There was some hope that while we were still working with CHMS they could be helpful in this regard, but that did not happen.

There are two paths the Committee can see in this area. One would be some sort of formal training on Association Management and the other some form of coaching. The first would likely be too time consuming, though if Rebecca were interested, we would support her pursuing it. For the second, coaching, drawing on one of the past Society Presidents who would be willing to devote an hour a week for a few months talking through how things have been, and might be done, could be helpful. This would include how best to work with the Policy Council and how to manage staff and member expectations and activities. If Rebecca is interested in pursuing this, the Committee would try to find an appropriate person for her to work with, or she might offer a suggestion.

## Bonus

In recognition of Rebecca's outstanding performance in 2020 we recommend that she receive a bonus of \$10,000 (less required payroll deductions). Such bonus, if approved by the Policy Council, should be paid as soon as is practical.

## 2021 and Beyond

The key observation for ongoing reviews is that Rebecca is managing the Central Office of the Society and that it is the performance of that operation, including Rebecca and everyone else working under her direction, that is most important to the Society. To this end, we are recommending an annual review of the operation of the Society's Central Office looking at:

- **Financials:** Review of controls and the reporting mechanisms to ensure that everyone who needs information has it, and that the budget creation and performance against are well managed. (Finance Committee)
- **Administration:** Day-to-day operational policies need to be consistent with good professional practice as well as the Bylaws and Policies of the Society. While not everything is under the purview of the Central Office, it should help to monitor Society activities to ensure their consistency with the goals and policies of the Society. (Executive Committee)
- **Documentation:** The Society needs to have sufficient organizational memory to ensure it can continue to function reasonably should one or more of those supporting it (a staff person,

contractor, or volunteer) no longer be available. Documenting activities is an effective way of ensuring such continuity. (Performance Committee, defined below)

- **Operations:** The Central Office needs to ensure that things run smoothly. Memberships need to be renewed, questions answered, stakeholders communicated with, difficulties resolved, and connections made. (Performance Committee)
- **Membership:** Meeting membership goals is important. (VP Membership)
- **Conference:** We are hoping for conferences that attract many people, are rewarding experiences for those attending, and are financially successful. Performance needs to be assessed relative to the conference plan/budget which the Central Office should help finalize. (VP Meetings)
- **Strategic Initiatives:** The Central Office should support strategic initiatives endorsed by the Policy Council (Strategy Committee)

And additionally, any other areas that seem important to assess performance.

## Process

We recommend the formation of a Performance Committee (as a Committee of the Board/Standing Committee) that consists of the President, Past President, President Elect, and one other member of the Policy Council, to be appointed annually without term limits. The committee would convene in the spring of each year to articulate what the goals are relative to the areas of performance outlined above. Such recommendations should be clear and could be simple (e.g 1,250 members) and should be provided to the Policy Council and the Executive Director.

In the beginning of October, the Executive Director would be responsible for preparing a report addressing performance relative to the goals provided in the spring statement. The Performance Committee would use that to seek comments from the individuals or committees associated with the different goals and from other members of the Policy Council, Society, or community as they choose. A written assessment would then be provided to the Executive Director for discussion. That report, with any amendments from the discussion with the Executive Director, would then be made available to the Policy Council.

## Bonus

As a Committee, we felt that the payment of bonuses makes sense if the performance of the Central Office exceeded expectations and the finances of the Society are solid. To this end, we recommend that a bonus pool of approximately \$25,000 be included in the annual budget. The specific amount should be recommended by the Finance Committee for the approval of the Policy Council through the normal budgeting process (or as an amendment if necessary).

The Performance Committee would then, based on its evaluation of Central Office Performance relative to goals, and as part of the written review, recommend that part, or all, of the budgeted bonus pool be paid out. The Finance Committee would review that recommendation and approve or amend it.

## Bonus Disbursement

The allocation of the bonus to different individuals, including the Executive Director, staff, and contractors, should be made by the Executive Committee in discussion with the Executive Director.